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Fleet Intelligence Center Pacific

Pearl Harbor, HI 96860-7450

March 1987

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The Spratly Islands -

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SUMMARY (U)

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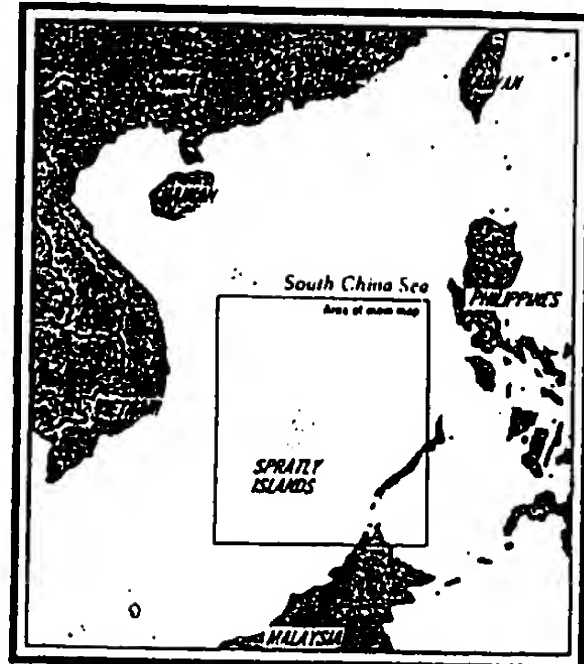
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(U) The Spratly Islands are a potentially hazardous area for ships and aircraft operating in the South China Sea. The crewmembers of U.S. units transiting the region should be aware of the diplomatic and military sparring which takes place in and around the Spratly group. In the past, ships and aircraft have been fired on by the disputing parties.

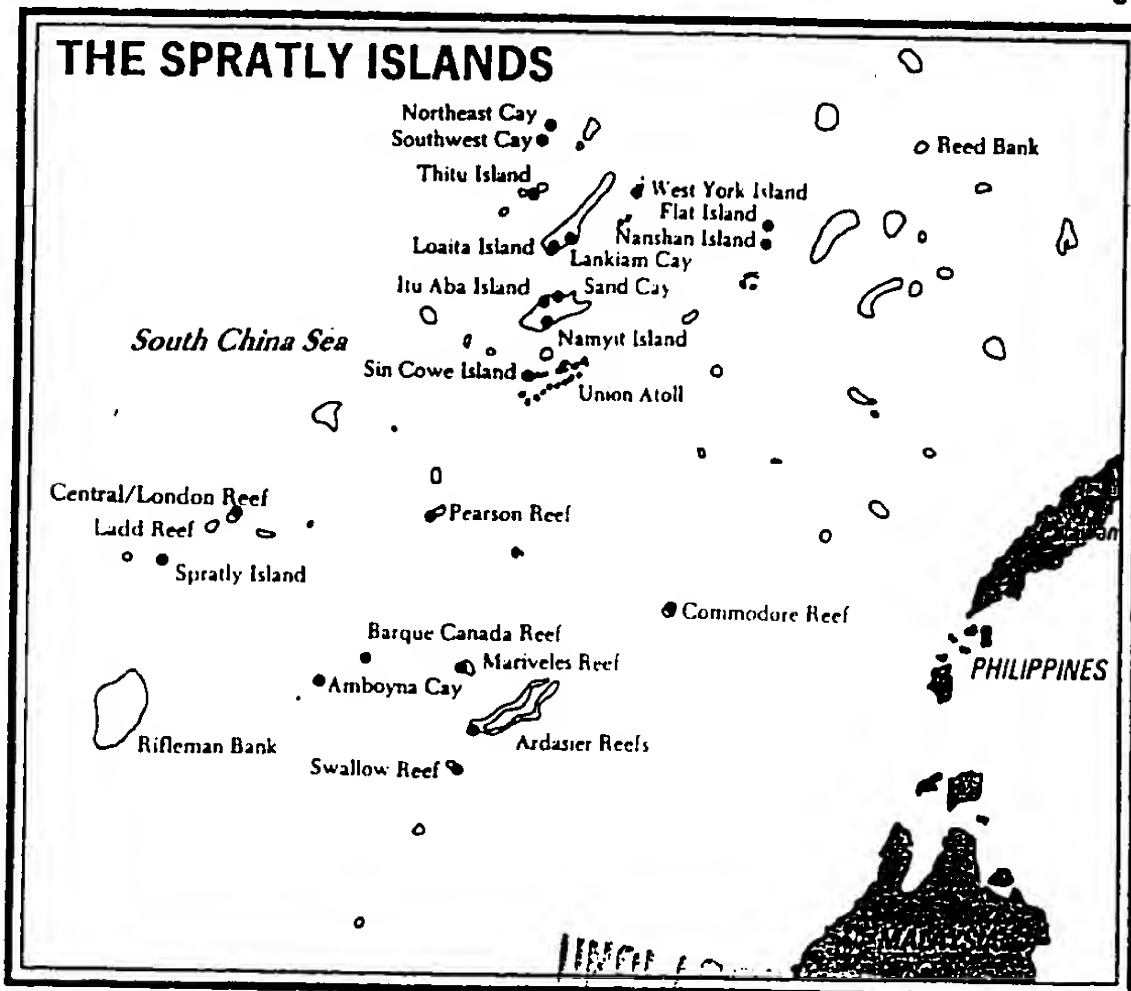
(U) The Spratly group is composed of over 100 islands in the South China Sea. Vietnam (SRV), Taiwan (ROC), the Peoples Republic of China (PRC), Republic of the Philippines (RP) and Malaysia (MY) each lay claim to all or part of the Spratlys. The PRC is the only one of these countries which does not maintain a military presence in the area.

(U) The increase in interest and activity in the past few years is probably attributable to one or more of the following:

- > Speculation that there are substantial petroleum reserves in the area
- > The islands' strategic location astride important sea lines of communication
- > National prestige and mutual jealousy



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GENERAL (U)

(U) The coral islands, cays and reefs which make up the Spratly islands are scattered over an area measuring approximately 500nm by 200nm and are mostly uninhabited. The archipelago is comprised of about 100 small islands whose combined total land area is about 1 square mile. None of the islands has an elevation of more than 20 feet.

(U) The U.S. recognizes no claims to the Spratlys and considers the area to be disputed territory. The U.S. has, however, established a 15nm buffer zone around the islands as a politically sensitive area.



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(U) The Spratly Islands are strategically located astride several shipping lanes, as illustrated on the map above. THE REEFS, SHOALS AND SHALLOW DEPTHS MAKE THE SPRATLY GROUP A DANGEROUS AREA FOR NAVIGATION.

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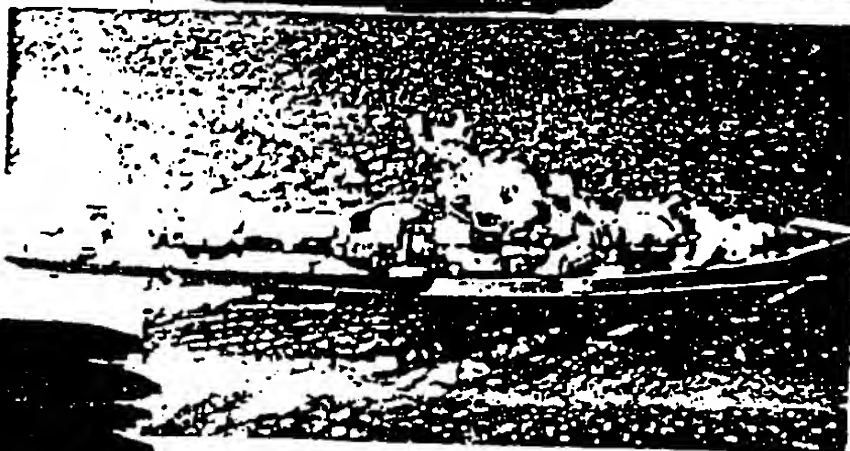
HISTORY (U)

(U) Based on historical use of the area by fishermen, the PRC, ROC, and SRV claim the entire Spratly Group. Beginning in the late 1800's, a succession of countries including Great Britain, Japan and France have claimed the Spratlys. In the peace treaty that followed WWII, the Japanese renounced any claim to the Spratlys and, since that time, there has been no accepted international agreement regarding the status of these islands.

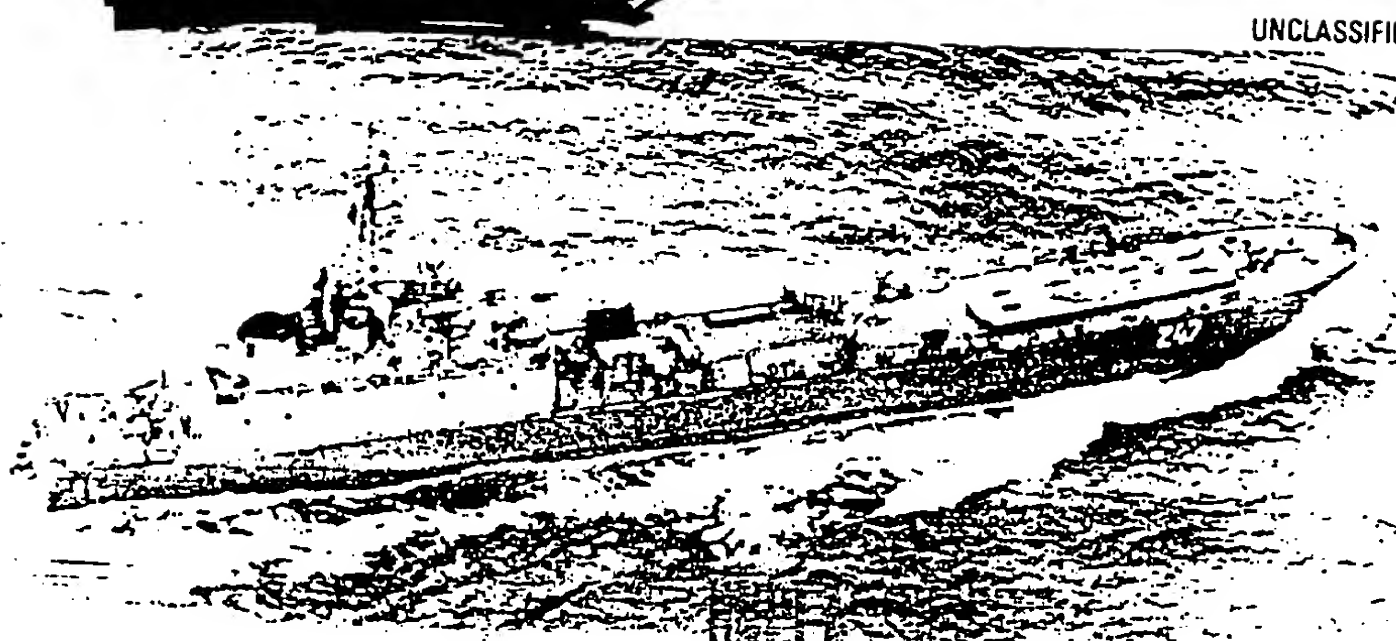
(U) The ROC established a garrison at Itu Aba in 1946, which remained until 1950. During the early 1950's, the islands appeared to be completely uninhabited and used only by transient fishermen. The ROC reoccupied Itu Aba in 1956. In 1970, the Philippines established a presence on Nanshan and, possibly, Thitu and Flat islands. Since that time the Philippine government

has, on numerous occasions, reaffirmed its claim to the Spratlys.

(U) In the midst of the conflicting claims being expressed by the PRC, ROC, and the Philippines, the Republic of Vietnam advanced the position that the Spratlys were turned over to them when the French left Indochina. They also alleged that, at the San Francisco Peace Conference in 1951, they proclaimed sovereignty over the archipelago with no objection from any other country present.



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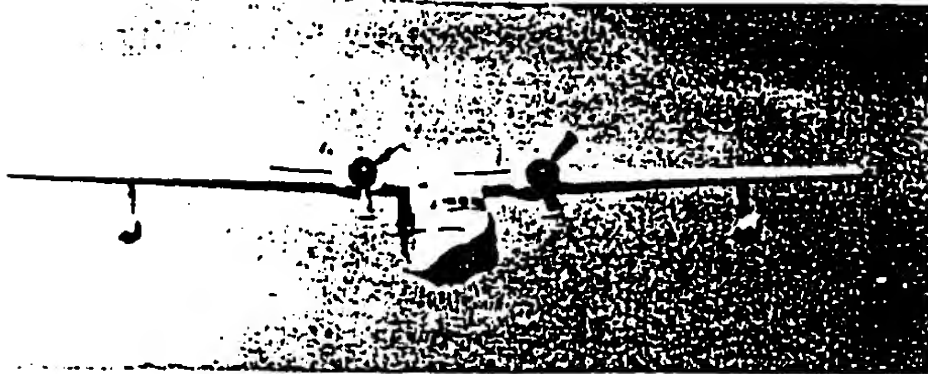


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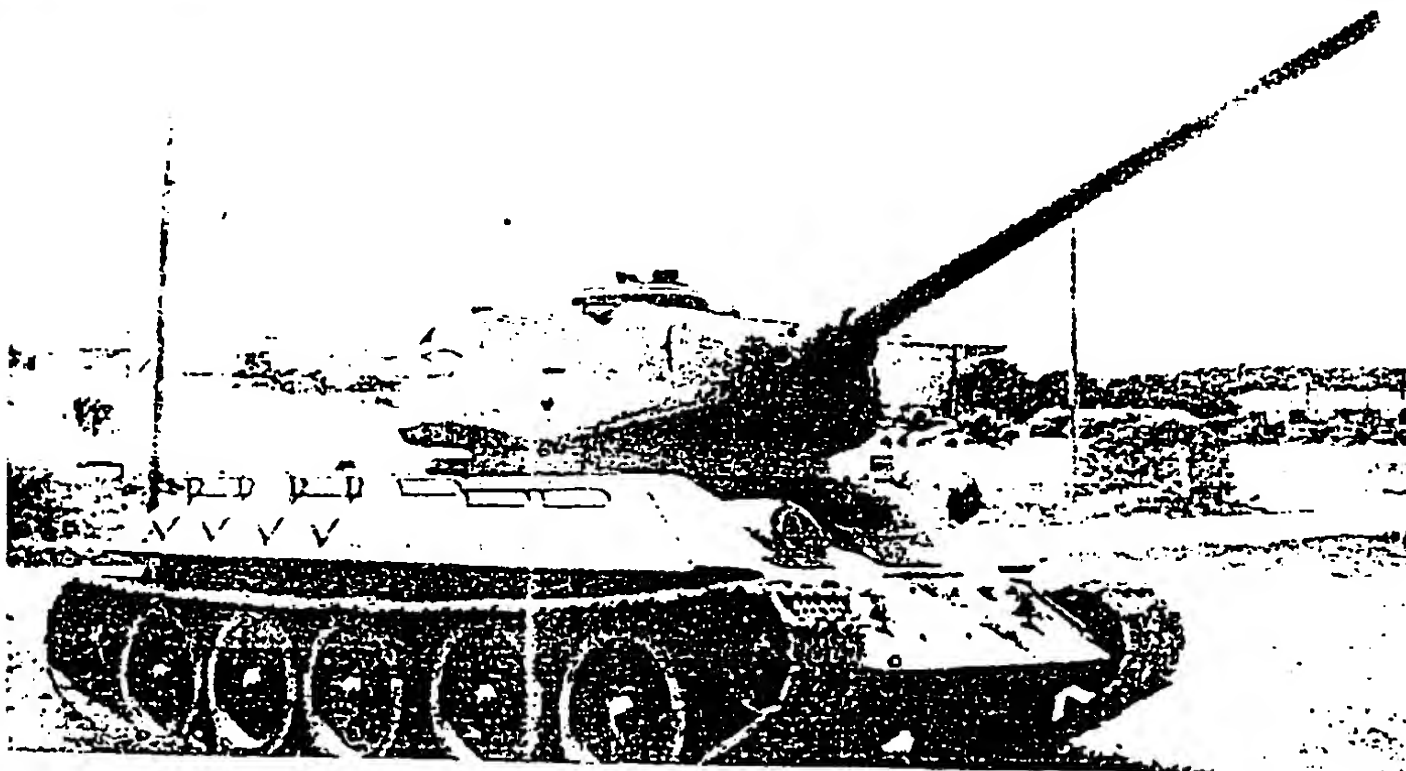
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TABLE OF ALTERNATE NAMES (U)

Western Name	Filipino	Vietnamese	Chinese (Pinyin)
Spratly Group	Kalayaan	Quan Dao Truong Sa	Nansha Qundao
Amboyna Cay	Kalantiyaw	An Bang	Anbo Shazhou
Commodore Reef	Rizal Reef	unknown	Siling Jiao
Flat Is.	Patag (Sikaluna)	unknown	Antang (Fei Xin Dao)
Itu Aba Is.	Ligaw	Thai Binh	Taiping Dao
Lankiam Cay	Panata	unknown	Yangxin Zhou
Loaita Is.	Kota (Dagahoy Dugad)	Loai Ta	Nanyue Dao
Namyit Is.	Binago	Namyit	Hangxue Dao
Nanshan Is.	Lawak (Tamblot)	Vinh Vien	Mahuan Dao
Northeast Cay	Parola (Faroba Ciriaco)	Song Tu Dong	Beizi Jiao (Dao)
Pearson Reef	Hizon Reef	unknown	Bisheng Dao
Sand Cay Is.	Truman	Son Ca	Bailan Jiao
Sin Cowe Is.	Rurok (Lorenzo)	Sin Tonh	Jinghong Dao
Southwest Cay	Pugad (Irene)	Song Tu Tay	Nanzi Jiao (Dao)
Spratly (Storm) Is.	Lagos (Ramon)	Truong Sa	Nanwei Dao
Thitu Is.	Pagasa (Abad Santos)	Thi Tu	Zhongye Dao
Union Atoll	unknown	unknown	Jinlun Tan
West York Is.	Likas (Carlos)	Ben Lac	Xiyue Dao

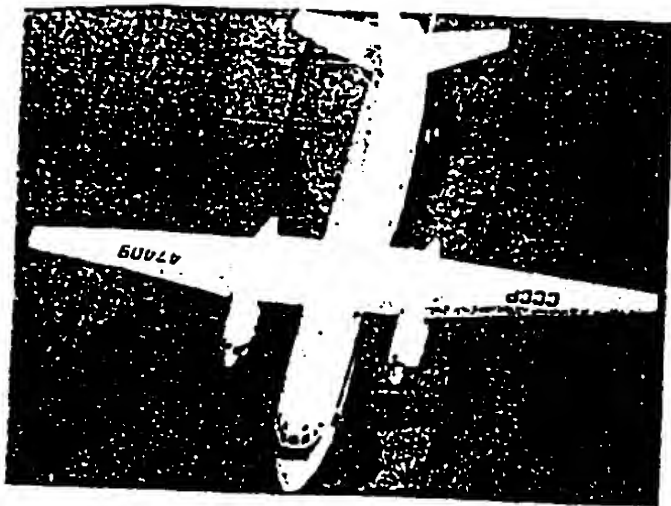
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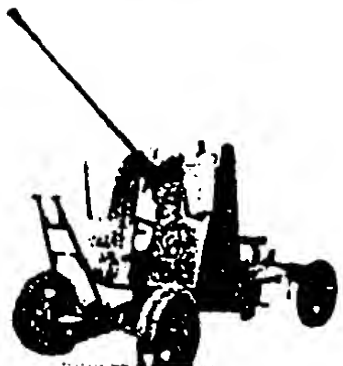
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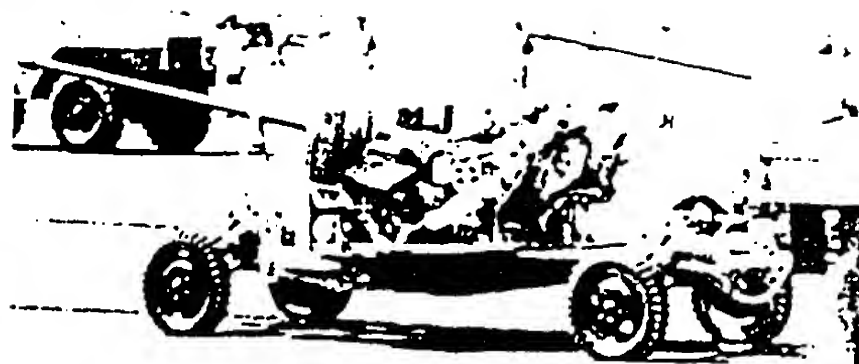
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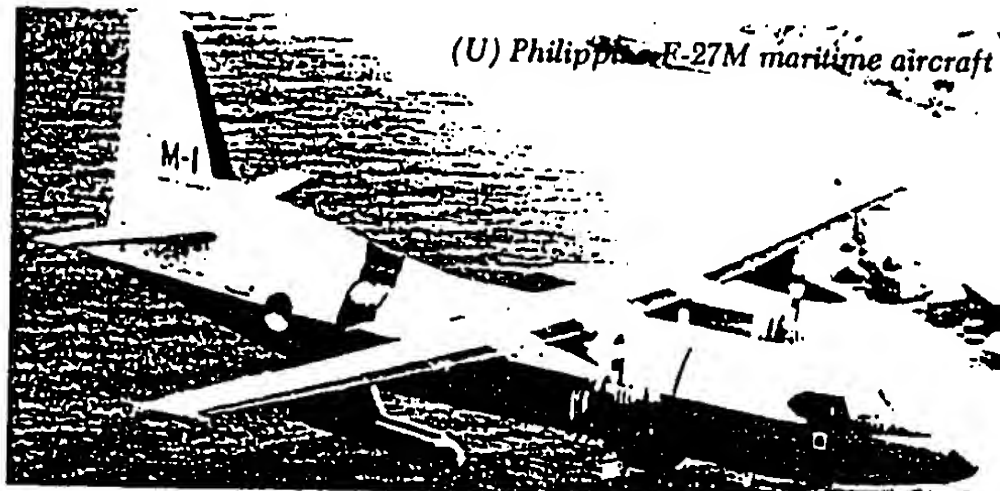
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CONCLUSION (U)

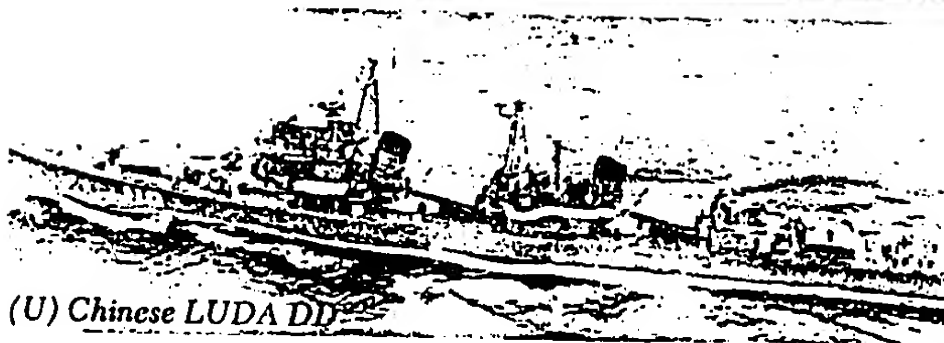
(U) The five nations involved in the dispute over control of the Spratly group are expected to continue to go to great lengths to avoid a military conflict. There is, however, the chance that an accident or miscalculation could lead to a serious incident. As the number of unoccupied islands dwindles, and as pressure for resource exploitation grows, the potential for military confrontation will increase. It is important that U.S. sailors and airmen be aware that anyone straying too close to one of the islands in this sensitive area could be challenged by nervous defenders.

PLATFORMS WHICH FREQUENT THE SPRATLY AREA



(U) Philippine R-27M maritime aircraft

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(U) Chinese LUDA DD

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(U) Malaysian S-61A-4 NURI helicopter

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(U) Taiwanese Gearing FRAM 1 DD

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